DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 461 043 CE 082 814

AUTHOR Stevens, Paul
TITLE Portfolio Careerism: Are You Ready?
INSTITUTION Centre for Worklife Counselling, Sydney (Australia).
PUB DATE 2001-00-00
NOTE 6p.
AVAILABLE FROM For full text: http://www.worklife.com.au/resource/portcar.html.
PUB TYPE Opinion Papers (120)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adult Education; Career Change; *Career Development; Career Planning; Developed Nations; *Employment Potential; Entrepreneurship; Foreign Countries; *Lifelong Learning; Marketing; Occupational Mobility; Portfolio Assessment; *Portfolios (Background Materials); Self Employment; Self Evaluation (Individuals); *Self Management; Temporary Employment; *Vocational Adjustment; Work Attitudes
IDENTIFIERS Australia

ABSTRACT

A career is a discontinuous a series of work roles using different personal attributes, skills, knowledge, interests, and wants. Individuals must examine their portfolio, select and rearrange it, and then sell themselves to the manager where they work or prospective clients/employers in the marketplace. Individuals should view career capabilities as a mosaic of great diversity and, as inclination, personal circumstances, and market demand indicate, rearrange employability offerings in packages of differing portfolio content. Career security comes from being continually alert to enhancing employability, skilled at career transition, and prepared to oscillate between worklife as a salaried employee and a fee-charging free agent. A free agent defines worklife fulfillment in terms of freedom to exercise personal integrity and undertake assignments compatible with personal values. Employees applying principles of portfolio career management enhance the security of their employability by regularly evaluating, then selecting from 10 career action step options. They seek out opportunities where they work to use their preferred skills, acquire desired new learning, and prepare a Career Action Step Proposal to those who can approve and facilitate the transition to it. The portfolio careerist--free agent or employee--must acquire and apply self-marketing skills; detective and networking skills to identify job moves; interpersonal skills in conflict resolution; and self-discipline to review worklife objectives and integrate them with lifestyle needs. (YLB)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 461 043

Portfolio Careerism: Are You Ready?

Paul Stevens

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

- ☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
- ☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
- • Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

P. Stevens

CE082814

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Portfolio Careerism: Are You Ready?

by Paul Stevens, Founder / Director, The Centre for Worklife Counselling

Changes in the work-world and new definitions of what a career is are challenging us to make sense of our careers and reassess their meaning in our lives. Employers are distracted by restructuring, eCommerce, mergers, acquisitions, managing outsourced work, global marketing and much more, to the extent that the message to their staff is clear. As employees, we are now expected to manage our own careers, determine our next career action steps, be skilled at formulating proposals for career moves and then making the transitions. Often when an employee seeks career advice from the Human Resource function to clarify their career confusion, they are directed to a career coaching provider external to the organisation.

Traditional job definitions are vaporising. Multi-functional roles are in vogue. Work teams with changing members are replacing work systems based on organisational charts. It's an era of restructured employer-worker relationships. Now we work with the new concept that our employment path is a series of successive contracts where our relationship with each employer is a transactional arrangement. This negotiated arrangement is for only as long as there is a justifiable business-based need for specific work to be done. Employers no longer keep us on their payroll during slack periods.

Long-term expectations of employment with one employer have been replaced by an enterprise or entrepreneurial culture. A career is now mostly discontinuous, where people are stringing together a series of work roles using different personal attributes, skills, knowledge, interests and wants. To meet this requirement, we have to examine our portfolio, select and rearrange it, and then we have to 'sell' ourselves either to our manager where we work or to prospective clients or employers in the general marketplace.

What we can do

People should view their career capabilities as a mosaic of considerable diversity and, as inclination, personal circumstances and labour market demand indicate, rearrange their employability offerings many times in packages of differing portfolio content. It's a more fluid working world where we make new decisions, frequently knowing many may be short term. This is the way to manage one's career as a portfolio careerist.

> ***I think of careers in terms of Legos. You might have a space station, but a kid takes a space vehicle and uses it at the zoo and then it becomes an ambulance that takes people to the hospital. The pieces are reconfigured, but their essential properties have not mutated.***
>
> Barbara Moses
> author of ***Career Intelligence***

We can either view this evolving situation with apprehension—even fear—or embrace it as facilitating a much wider range of career action choice than our parents experienced. It becomes essential to know how to carry out regular self-assessment so that we can rearrange our career portfolio appropriately.

Our career security comes from being continually alert to enhancing our employability, be-

Worklife has been providing career and life planning coaching and career program design since 1979.
Our services are described on our web site: http://www.worklife.com.au
Details of our personal career coach eLearning and eBook system may be found at: http://www.careermastery.com

© Worklife Pty Ltd, Sydney 2001

ing skilled at career transition making, being prepared to oscillate between worklife as an employee on month-by-month salary and as a free agent charging fees.

Joanna Grigg writes in ***Portfolio Working*** (Kogan-Page) this enhanced employability can be one or more of the following:

- a cluster of jobs or clients for whom we work;
- a hybrid career, a new variety of work and living;
- a flexible way of approaching work;
- a work survival technique for the 21st century;
- the extension of this work planning into every aspect of our lives.

Free agents

The Australian Bureau of Statistics reported recently that of the country's workforce of 9.1 million 37% are 'casualised', meaning either in a part-time or subcontractor relationship with organisations. In other words, a large part of our working population is moving enthusiastically or reluctantly into a working life as a free agent.

A free agent is further defined as earning income as a freelancer, subcontractor, commission agent, casual or as owner of their own business. People hired for a specific duration are also free agents. A free agent may work as a 'satellite' worker from or near home, on-line through their computers and modems, in client organisations or in a different country from where they are deriving income.

The growth of free agents is a relatively recent characteristic of career situations. To date, little thorough research exists into how people are viewing their transitions as free agents or what constitute prerequisite characteristics.

Our research findings

At The Centre for Worklife Counselling in Sydney we have been assisting clients make the transition from full-time employment since 1979 and have accumulated substantial anecdotal evidence of how being a free agent affects them. In recent years we have experienced a considerable increase in the number of people wanting to explore free agency options but unsure of their suitability for such a change or how to make it.

What we have observed at Worklife is that there is no one type of person who is more likely to be successful than another.

The issue is much more than defining a particular 'behavioural type' as being likely to succeed.

Figure 1 — Ten Career Action Options

Option		Involves
1.	**Remain in Current Role** No content change	Recognition that your current role provides you with your desired level of challenge and development at the moment
2.	**Enrichment** Develop current job	Considering what job tasks you wish to do more and negotiating with others to take over those which no longer motivate you
3.	**Vertical** Seek promotion	Considering what would be the real gain for you in seeking increased responsibilities
4.	**Exploration** Test out options	Seeking project work or deputising in another job function to test out how you like it
5.	**Lateral** Sideways move	Moving to a similar level of job task difficulty but with different job content
6.	**Realignment** Moving down	Downshifting to less responsibility for a short- or long-term period
7.	**Relocation** Change business unit	Deciding that work of a nature different from your current business unit is more appropriate for your career future
8.	**Redirection** Change career field	Changing the career stream or field of work with your current employer
9.	**Proposal** Create new job	Submitting a proposal for creating a new job which would meet the needs of your employer and you
10.	**External** Change employer	Deciding that work of a nature different from your current employer is more appropriate for your career future

© Worklife Pty Ltd, Sydney 2001

Rather it is a complex compendium of personal circumstances, feelings, life journey timing, etc. within the individual. What we have learned is that those who index their career success as a linear trajectory with progressive hierarchical-oriented job moves and where status of position and use of job role authority are highly valued, find it difficult to enjoy and thrive as free agents.

There's no such thing as a career path any more—it's crazy paving and you lay it yourself

A free agent is more likely to define their worklife fulfilment in terms of freedom to exercise their personal integrity and undertake assignments compatible with their personal values. In other words, they are able to remove themselves from work engagements where conflict arises with their integrity and values. To make such a transition based solely on escape from too much unfulfilling work as an employee is an inadequate basis although this factor could constitute one of the reasons. A free agent is likely to:

- prize allegiance to their profession or craft over corporate allegiance;
- be committed to and gain from the intrinsic motivation of a mission or task rather than to a company; and
- define themselves by what they do and why they do it, not for whom they do it.

In addition to the career assistance provided by our Centre, there are many skilled helpers available to provide a framework for helping individuals to analyse clearly and objectively, to plan and review their worklife situation, to feel secure in their unique and authentic self, to learn portfolio career management techniques, to evaluate free agency options. Frequently termed 'career coaches' or 'career counsellors' these advisers are located all over Australia. See the web site of the Australian Association of Career Counsellors (AACC) at www.aacc.org.au

The 10 Option Employee

Those who elect to continue their careers as an employee and apply the principles of portfolio career management enhance the security of their employability by regularly evaluating, then selecting from ten career action step options (see Figure 1). They have ceased waiting for an internal job vacancy but rather seek out opportunities where they work to utilise their preferred skills and acquire desired new learning.

Their next action is to prepare a proposal to those who can approve and facilitate the transition to it. Figure 2 shows the headings recommended for structuring a proposal. For a resource to guide this process, see ***My Career, My Life, Myself*** by Stevens www.worklife.com.au. Supplementary workbooks written by Stevens and published by The Centre for Worklife Counselling are ***Job Seeking Where You Work*** and ***Planning For Me! Sorting Out Conflicting Priorities***.

Freeing yourself from an unhealthy and outdated dependence on your employer for your 'satisfiers' and feeling, thinking and acting as a portfolio careerist increases your employability value to your employer and, in turn, your options.

Figure 2 — Career Action Step Proposal

My Career Action Step Proposal

What?

Where?

When?

My Contribution to Performance Improvement:

List your proposed actions and support needs

My Professional Development Plan:

What you believe you should undertake new learning in priority sequence

My Self-Development Plan:

Your personal actions relating to supporting your career action step

My Current Position Enrichment Plan:

How your current job role may be enhanced to increase your satisfaction and readiness to make your proposed

© Worklife Pty Ltd, Sydney 2001

The book ***Free Agents*** by Gould, Weiner and Levin www.josseybass.com contains excellent advice for employees on these aspects and also information for their managers on the systemic changes needed to create environments where portfolio careerists will want to continue to work.

Self-marketing

Whether a free agent or employee, the portfolio careerist needs to acquire and apply:

- skills of self-marketing;
- detective and networking skills to identify opportunities for job role or work assignment moves;
- interpersonal skills in conflict resolution so that relationships with work colleagues or clients are not disruptive;
- self-discipline to review worklife objectives and integrate them with lifestyle needs at least twice each year.

They also need to update their résumé—both print and electronic versions—each month as it is becoming as important to the portfolio careerist as a passport is to a traveller.

When asked what we do, we no longer have to respond with a monosyllabic reply. The questioners can now hear willingly or otherwise about your portfolio careerism and the variety and stimulation of the four or six concurrent job role activities you have selected.

The number of Internet web sites where employers advertise for employees and free agents is escalating. In addition to publicising vacancies, the developers and managers of these sites provide much useful content about managing one's own career. A portfolio careerist in Australia would benefit from accessing the sites that follow:

www.monster.com.au

www.seek.com.au

www.employment.com.au

www.Mycareer.com.au

www.resumesonline.com.au

www.CareerOne.com.au

www.futurestep.com.au

www.careermosaic.com.au

www.hotjobs.com.au

www.anzwers.com.au/jobs/

www.jobsplus.com.au

Guard against cynicism

When managing one's own career, it is dangerous to view the current radical change in workplace cultures as temporary, to mourn the end of predictability, to take no action and await the return to expectations of lifelong employment that were prevalent in the 1960s-1980s. This would be an error. In reality, the world of work has never been constant. It is changing again—and dramatically. A workforce dominated by those who are employees is on the wane.

Portfolio careerism is not new. It was how people earned a living prior to the Industrial Revolution in the early 19th century.

Yesterday's history, Tomorrow's a mystery, Today is a gift. That's why we call it the PRESENT!

Today we have far more choice than a decade ago. We need to educate ourselves in how to use it for our own benefit. As a consequence, those we care for will also benefit as they are affected by our level of worklife contentment. At the same time we need to preserve respect for our employers who provide us with their changing portfolio of opportunities to earn income, whether as a free agent or an employee. Portfolio careerism suits employers' new attitudes to their human resources.

WORKLIFE®

The Centre for Worklife Counselling

Paul Stevens, Founder/Director

Tel: (02) 9968 1588 Fax: (02) 9968 1655

Web Site: http://www.worklife.com.au Email: worklife@ozemail.com.au

PO Box 407, Spit Junction NSW 2088, Australia

College for Career Practitioners

Developed by The Centre for Worklife Counselling, the College is an on-line learning program in Career Counselling delivered by a combination of distance education, email coaching, dedicated web site, 13 module study guides, textbook and selected instruments.

Three Study Stream Options

eLearning Facility

Global Student / Tutor Community

© Worklife Pty Ltd, Sydney 2001